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NEW FILMS

HOW THREE SNIPERS SHOT THE PRESIDENT

WHO KILLED President Kennedy? Lee Harvey Oswald, acting on his own. That was the conclusion of the U.S. Government's official investigation, the Warren Report.

Not so, says a new Hollywood film, *EXECUTIVE ACTION* **(Odeon, Leicester Square, "A," 91 minutes).**

by Richard Barkley

It suggests that three snipers gunned down the President in Dallas, on November 22, 1963; that they were part of a conspiracy hatched by a group of Right-wing Americans; and that Oswald, who was arrested then murdered by club-owner Jack Ruby, was no more than a scapegoat deliberately selected by the plotters because of his cryptic, Left-wing background.

Using newsreel and TV films of the time, reconstructions of factual events, and purely fictional scenes, the film proceeds like this:—

Burt Lancaster and Robert Ryan play two of a small group of "powerful" Americans (their actual status is left vague) who meet to plot the assassination.

Disastrous

Their motive? They believe that the President's liberal policies — pro-Negro, pro-Test Ban treaty with Russia, pro-pull out from Vietnam—will be disastrous for America.

And they resent the exclusive power of the Kennedy family, which seems to have sewn up the presidency for the foreseeable future, with two terms likely for John, two for Robert, and then two for Edward.

Three sharp-shooters are selected for the job and are rigorously trained as a team to hit a dummy moving target in the desert.

Their allegiance is assured: firstly, all were involved in the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and blame the President for its ignominious failure.

Secondly, each is assured swift passage out of America, a new identity with matching passport, 25,000 dollars a year for five years, and then a further 100,000 dollars in a secret Swiss bank account.

Next, a double for the real Oswald is recruited, coached in his voice and mannerisms, and then set to lay a trail of incriminating evidence that will lead the authorities and the Press to the real Oswald immediately after the murder.

Finally, the film suggests that the conspirators were sufficiently influential to *ensure* that the President's motorcade would travel along Dealey Plaza, where the actual assassination took place.

At this point on the route, the President's open car would be moving slowly after turning a corner. And the three riflemen, masquerading as Secret Service men, are carefully positioned to triangulate the target, one in the Texas School Book Depository, one on a rooftop, and the third concealed beneath trees on a grassy knoll.

Shadowy

As drama it is fair enough, but its conclusions remain speculative, its conspirators mere shadowy figures, their motives somehow not strong enough for murder. Do sane men, even Americans, really believe that the death of a politician will be the death of his policies? Maybe, but the film did not convince on that score.

Yet such is the way the screen can play games with evidence, I felt I had been watching the first instalment of a series, in which the next episode will reveal that Burt Lancaster's Right-wing patriot is really a Communist agent.

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SKILL ON a motorbike won Teresa Oates her first actin riding hillbilly tomboy" in t Teresa, born and raised in T to break into films a